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ABSTRACT

This annual report begins with an executive summary that presents highlights of FY (fiscal year) 1998 accomplishments of the National Library of Education (NLE) related to the ED (Education Department) Reference Center, ERIC, ED Web, USNEI (U.S. Network for Education Information), NEN (National Education Network), and marketing research and outreach. The introduction provides background on NLE and discusses implementation of the NLE Advisory Task Force Report, "Access for All: A New National Library for Tomorrow's Learners," as well as NLE programmatic authority and activities. The main section of the document describes NLE FY 1998 accomplishments in the following areas: (1) customer service; (2) customer profile; (3) customer geographic origin; (4) how customers reach NLE; (5) an overall view of NLE operations; (6) reference center; (7) customer requests; (8) customer categories by program; (9) ED Reference Center performance; (10) customer satisfaction; (11) ERIC; (12) INet: the Department's World Wide Web presence; (13) EDPubs: Education Publication Center; (14) NCEF (National Clearinghouse for Education Facilities); (15) NEN; (16) USNEI; (17) marketing research and outreach; and (18) research projects. A list of NLE contacts is included. (MES)

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NATIONAL LIBRARY OF EDUCATION
1998 ANNUAL REPORT

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NATIONAL LIBRARY OF EDUCATION
1998 ANNUAL REPORT

September, 1999

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC

U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
C. Kent McGuire
Assistant Secretary

National Library of Education
Blane K. Dessy
Executive Director

Author of Report
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National Library of Education

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Judy A. Craig
National Library of Education

The mission of the National Library of Education is to ensure equal access to high-quality education information in all formats and from multiple sources and to promote educational excellence by providing high quality assistance to information seekers.

Section 951(b) and (c) of the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994 (20) U.S.C. 6051) "There is established within the Department of Education a National Library of Education which shall provide a central location within the Federal Government for information about education, provide comprehensive reference services on matters related to education to employees of the Department of education and its contractors and grantees, other federal employees, and the general public; and to promote greater cooperation and resource sharing among providers and repositories of education information in the United States.

The Library shall use modern information technology that holds the potential to link major libraries, schools, and educational centers across the United States into a network of national education resources."

Photography by: Office of Management U.S. Department of Education
Barry Myers

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WELCOME FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF EDUCATION

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the National Library of Education! I am very pleased that you are taking the time to read our Annual Report and to learn about the many exciting services and projects that are underway. Created in 1994, the National Library of Education is very young and yet we have made tremendous strides in meeting our legislative mandates and in responding to our customers.

The goals established by the NLE Advisory Task Force are categorized into four areas: Access, Awareness, Assistance, and Accountability. Befitting a National Library created in the Information Age, we stress our role as an Information Broker rather than as a depository of materials. Our goals reflect our dedication to customer service and our evaluations are always based upon positive outcomes for our Library users.

Please read our Report thoroughly; you will be pleasantly surprised and impressed by the accomplishments of the National Library of Education. None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the staff and other professional colleagues. I want to personally thank members of the Library staff for their diligence, creativity, and team spirit. I also want to thank the Department of Education for their faith in our mission and our efforts. The Department has been very supportive of our work as we grow, expand, and develop new initiatives.

If you have never used the services of the National Library of Education, please contact us. If you are already a customer, thank you for your support. As the Library continues to grow and our constituency continues to expand, I am confident our services will become even better.

On behalf of the National Library of Education, thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Blane K. Dessy, Executive Director

Blane K. Dessy
Executive Director

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20208-5721

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF OERI

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF EDUCATION

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to present the first Annual Report of the National Library of Education. Over the last five years the Library has made impressive strides and adds greatly to the research and dissemination functions of the Office of Education Research and Improvement and the Department of Education.

The National Library of Education collects, organizes, and disseminates education information throughout the Department of Education, the United States, and the world. It does this through the power of new electronic information technologies as well as traditional information services. As you read this report, I believe the variety of tasks performed by the Library, the variety of services available, and the high level of customer service attained will impress you.

The Library is part of the broad dissemination function managed by the Department of Education and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Both the Department and OERI sponsor the development of "best practices" in education; provide funding for educational research and development in a wide variety of areas; manage programs that bring the best of education theory to schools across America; and assist citizens and institutions in fulfilling lifelong educational goals. The National Library of Education supports us in all of these activities. The Library, through its knowledge management and organization, makes it easier for all of our customers to obtain the information they need.

The Library has a challenging mission, and if the initial progress is an indication of success, it has a very bright future.

Sincerely,

C. Kent McGuire

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20208-5721

Executive Summary

The National Library of Education presents highlights of FY 1998 accomplishments.

ED Reference Center

Among the highlights of FY 1998 for the ED Reference Center have been:

- Completed planning and preparations for the move of NLE offices and the ED Reference Center to a new location in the Department of Education headquarters building in early FY 1999. A complete inventory and weeding of the physical collection was accomplished along with design of the new facilities and negotiation with move contractors.
- Installation and completion of staff training on the new Teloquent® automated call center system, which has already greatly increased the efficiency of the toll-free reference service.
- Acquisition of a new MAXCESS® online catalog system and contractor support for migrating the catalog to electronic form.

ERIC

Among the FY 1998 highlights of the ERIC program were:

- Launching the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM) and Virtual Reference Desk (VRD) projects.
- Launching the ERIC Wizard (http://ericae.net) and SearchERIC (http://www.askeric.org) search engines to make online customer searches of the ERIC database easier and more reliable; and
- Recompetition of the 16 ERIC Clearinghouse contracts for a new 5-year award cycle to begin in FY 1999.

ED Web

Highlights of ED Web during FY 1998 included:

- The complete redesign of the main ED Web site, http://www.ed.gov/, including new page layouts, content, and search features;
- Launching of several new web sites to support major initiatives, including Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) (http://www.ed.gov/free/) and the U.S. Network for Education Information (USNEI) (see below);
- Growth of the ED Online Library to over 250,000 data files and more than 100 individual home pages; and
- Development of new Department policies for web activity in conjunction with the newly created Internet Working Group (IWG).

USNEI

Founded in 1996, USNEI highlights in FY 1998 included:

- Launching of the USNEI web site, http://www.ed.gov/NLE/USNEI/;
- Successful diplomatic intervention with the Council of Europe on behalf of accredited U.S. schools that were wrongly reported as illegitimate in Council publications; and
- Intervention with several national governments in regard to erroneous information concerning the status of U.S. institutions and degrees.

National Education Network (NEN)

NEN mission statement was approved and Executive Committee was named.

Marketing Research and Outreach

Marketing Research and Outreach highlights included:

- Initiation of regular customer satisfaction surveys for key Department information dissemination programs, as well as customer focus groups;
- Establishment of The Column, a regular customer newsletter;
- Intensified visibility and outreach via the NLE Quarterly Lecture Series, high-tech interactive exhibits at major national information services conferences, and interagency collaboration with the Federal Library and Information Center Committee (FLICC);
- Membership in CENDI, an invitational consortium of leading federal agencies involved in the management of high-tech electronic information services; and
- Provision of informational training sessions for school teachers and media specialists focused on new tools for using education information in web-based instruction.

Introduction

The National Library of Education (NLE) was created by the Congress in March, 1994 to be the fourth national library[1] at the federal level. NLE has a clear mission to serve as the central federal location and a national one-stop reference information center in the field of education. *However, the Congress and the Administration designed NLE with a difference.* NLE was not to be a traditional book library emphasizing a passive collection function and limited on-site reference services. Nor was it to be either a Departmental archive or a giant physical or bureaucratic presence in Washington. Instead, NLE was intended to be a dynamic information dissemination system. A system that is electronic as well as print information center-reaching all Americans wherever they live, study, or work. NLE has fulfilled that inspiring and challenging mandate and we want to tell you how.

From the outset NLE has considered that its mission ought to be fulfilled by rethinking the traditional concept of a library. Most Americans do not live near the nation's capital, and most busy people of all ages do not have the time or the inclination to go to a location far away to obtain needed information. Instead of information seekers coming to NLE, NLE must go to the people.

At the same time that NLE was being created, America was also experiencing the rise of the electronic information superhighway and the vast capacity of the National Information Infrastructure to provide information to users in multiple formats (print, electronic, visual, etc.). Within libraries and information centers this development was characterized as the "virtual" library, which meant the ability to collect and disseminate information to any customer in any format. Furthermore, the virtual library with its electronic links did not have to be considered as a geographically bound place. Through networks and partnerships, as well as over the Internet, a virtual library could become a dynamic information services provider by using the multiplier effect of coordinated and shared resources.

NLE has embraced the concepts of a virtual information center and distributed resource network in order to meet the challenge of providing high-quality services while simultaneously heeding the call of the American people for a smaller yet more efficient government. The organizing guidelines for NLE were recently set forth in the set of recommendations issued by the NLE Advisory Task Force, a federal advisory committee appointed by the Secretary of Education, to address the broad question of how a National Library of Education should be developed.

---

[1] The others are the Library of Congress, National Agricultural Library, and National Library of Medicine

Implementing the NLE Advisory Task Force Report

In its report, ***Access for All: A New National Library for Tomorrow's Learners***[2], the NLE Advisory Task Force envisioned a national library characterized by the four principles of:

> *Awareness* - informing existing customers of available resources and services and cultivating new customers via marketing and outreach;
>
> *Access* - providing customers with effective and efficient means to reach and use NLE's resources and services in all formats;
>
> *Assistance* - enabling information seekers to find what they need and to use the tools and services provided to help them search; and
>
> *Accountability* - continually improving services through feedback from customers, resource sharing partners, staff and contractors, and government policymakers.

To fulfill these principles the Advisory Task Force recommended that NLE be organized to consist of three components: (1) one or more national networks of information providers in the field of education, including major libraries, operating collaboratively to set joint policies and deliver services; (2) a seamless multiple format reference information network consisting of clearinghouses, web sites, toll-free telephone numbers, and traditional services; and (3) a management center located in Washington, DC that would also operate a reference library facility for federal agency staff. NLE would be the sum of all of these operations, and the envisioned national collection of education information would be the shared resources of all of the components.

With this vision in mind, and following specific Task Force recommendations, the U.S. Department of Education and its office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) allocated resources to:

- support the establishment of resource-sharing networks;
- share the administration of Department web sites between NLE and the Chief Information Officer, with NLE responsible for information content; and
- place under NLE administration the Department's reference library, toll-free research and statistics information service, and several contractor-operated information dissemination programs.

The latter included the well-known and highly respected Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) program; the new National Center for Educational Facilities

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[2] Available online at NLE's web site, http://www.ed.gov/NLE/ or via ED Pubs at 1-877-433-7827 (English and Spanish speaking operators, TTY/TDD at 1-877-576-7734, ask for publication number NLE-97-2021.

(NCEF); and ED Pubs, the new product distribution center for the U.S. Department of Education.

The NLE that has emerged during its first five years of existence is a lean, efficient information center comprising a local hub and operating via national networks of private sector contractors and cooperating libraries and other information providers. These networks take full advantage of electronic dissemination. NLE's combination of services, resources, and formats help to ensure that as many customers as possible can access NLE, that its services are truly distributed across America, and that its development is enriched by input from sources outside as well as inside government.

Our Programmatic Authority and Activities

NLE was established with the following mission-critical responsibilities:

1. Providing a central location within the federal government for information about education;

2. Providing comprehensive reference information services to Department employees, contractors, grantees, and the public; and

3. Promoting greater resource sharing and cooperation among providers and repositories of education information in the United States.

To fulfill these responsibilities, NLE was authorized to do the following things:

- Become a principal national center for collecting, preserving, and utilizing research and other information covering all education-related issues, including educational quality and the improvement of educational achievement;

- Ensure widespread access to NLE resources and services by having an expert staff, using modern information technology and linkages, and establishing and operating a central one-stop information and referral service answering inquiries in all formats (including a toll-free telephone number);

- Produce and provide print and electronic reference resources on education-related subjects, including searches, electronic databases, information user training services, research counseling, directories and indexes and guides, and a national union list of education serials;

- Establish distributed information resource sharing networks among libraries, archives, and other providers of education information for cooperation in publicizing available resources, preservation of resources, and making them accessible to all; and

- Provide, from its central management headquarters, federal and public access to information on U.S. Department of Education programs; publications of the Department of Education and education-related publications of Labor, Health and Human Services, and other agencies; the resources and services of the ERIC Clearinghouses, National Research Institutes, and National Education Dissemination System; statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics; and other sources of education information.

Both the Congress and the Department of Education placed certain programs and activities under NLE administration in order to enable the mission and tasks to be fulfilled and to more efficiently consolidate agency information dissemination resources.

The programs placed under NLE include:

- the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) program and Clearinghouse network;
- the Institutional Communications Network (INet) program, also known as ED Web and as the Department's Internet presence;
- ED Pubs, the Department's new, consolidated publication and product distribution system; and
- the National Clearinghouse on Education Facilities (NCEF), newly established to provide information support to the national initiative on school construction and remodeling.

Among the activities placed under NLE administration are:

- the Department research library;
- the Department Reference Section and toll-free telephone service;
- the Department Information Branch;
- the U.S. Network for Education Information (USNEI), a treaty-based interagency and public/private information partnership supporting U.S. educational interests in the international marketplace; and
- the National Education Network (NEN), the core of NLE's emerging educational provider resource sharing partnership.

NLE believes it is important to see all of these programs and activities as logical components of a coherent information dissemination service that together fulfill its mission. These programs and services can be distinguished from other dissemination activities in that they are (1) exclusively concerned with education information service; (2) do not provide technical assistance or financial assistance; and (3) fit precise elements of NLE's mission and functions and thus eliminate duplication and unnecessary costs by being consolidated under NLE administration. We look forward to undertaking further responsibilities as customer demand justifies them and as resources permit.

FY 1998 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Customer Service

Enhancing customer service is a priority of the NLE. Evidence of this commitment is a reality with the operation of a new Education Publications Center, "ED Pubs." Customers are pleased with this centralized facility located in Jessup, Maryland.

NLE's customer universe consist of the educators, students, and parents of America, the general public interested in educational topics and issues, and the elected policymakers, government personnel, and private sector providers who serve them. Since government, the private sector, and the public have international as well as domestic interests and concerns, this also means that NLE serves U.S. customers who need international education information as well as customers residing abroad (including Americans) interested in U.S. education.

Table 1. —Number of Customers Served, FY 1998

ED Reference Center	105,470
ERIC Program	3,900,000
NCEF	†*
ED Pubs	34,934**
www.ed.gov/	12,506,281***
ED Gopher	789,267
ED FTP	248,707
TOTAL NLE	**7,584,659**

* The NCEF contract was not finally awarded until the end of FY 1998.
** ED Pubs only came online in late May and these statistics reflect 4 months' work.
*** The www.ed.gov/ data refer to visits to the ED web site; there were 53,796,665 page views and 251,823,657 hits.

NLE is one of the U.S. Department of Education's primary "gateway" services, and this fact is reflected in the number of customers we served during FY 1998 -- over 16 million. That works out to over 40 thousand customers for every federal and contract employee working for NLE.

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Customer Profile

The NLE moved into the completely modernized Federal Building 6 (FB6), the U.S. Department of Education's headquarters in December, 1998.

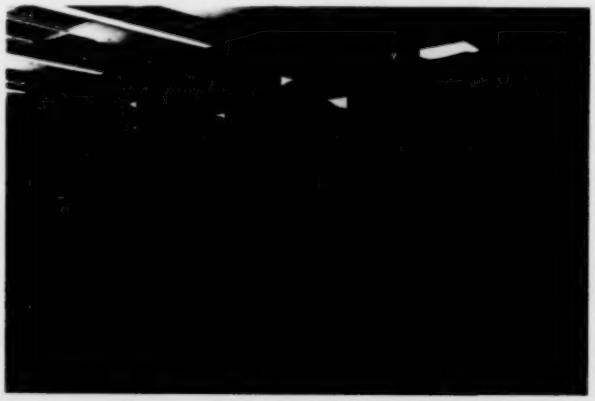


Table 2. —Who Our Customers Were in FY 1998 (Percent of Totals)

Customer Type	ED Ref.	ERIC	ED Pubs	ED Web	(Avg.)
K-12 Educators	46.2 %	21.6 %	18.8 %	3.8 %	**22.6%**
PSE Educators	11.9	13.4	2.3	5.8	**8.4**
Students	5.1	14.3	1.0	29.4	**12.5**
Parents	10.6	3.4	35.4	18.2	**16.9**
Federal Gov't	2.7	3.9	12.4	4.4	**5.9**
Other Gov't	4.8	3.7	2.0	5.5	**4.0**
Bus. Non-Profit	17.2	23.2	14.6	9.9	**16.2**
Journalists	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.0	**0.4**
Other (Gen. Pub.)	1.4	16.1	13.1	22.0	**13.2**

NOTE: Totals may not add to exactly 100 % due to rounding. No NCEF data were collected In FY 1998. ED Web data were collected via the ED Online Customer Survey.

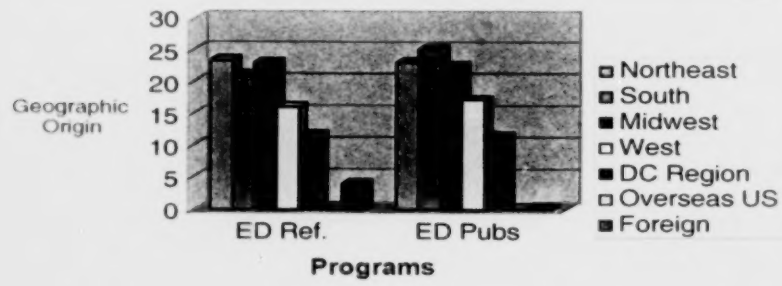
"Thank you for your prompt response, in these times of Government displeasure, it is nice to see that someone is there doing their job. You have helped restore some of my faith in Government and I will try to remember you when I start complaining about Government bureaucrats. Thanks again for your quick response."

Stockton, Customer

Customer Geographic Origin

Customer data show that the customers we actually served in FY 1998 track the categories we are supposed to serve: professional educators, parents, the private sector, government, and students. We will say more about differences among the customer populations of various programs when each is discussed.

Table 3. —Where Our FY 1998 Customers Came From by Program



NORTHEAST includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

SOUTH includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina,Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia.

MIDWEST includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

WEST includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

DC REGION includes District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

OVERSEAS US includes American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marinas, Panama Canal Zone (until 2000), Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, and US sovereign installations abroad.

FOREIGN includes residents or citizens of all countries other than the United States.

NOTE: The FY 1998 ERIC contracts did not require the reporting of customer origin data. The new cycle contracts will report these data.

The geographic distribution of our customers shows that NLE is indeed reaching the entire nation rather than just concentrating on Washington, DC. Most of our customers are from several hundred miles outside the capital or farther away. NLE served every state and territory in FY 1998 and over sixty foreign countries.

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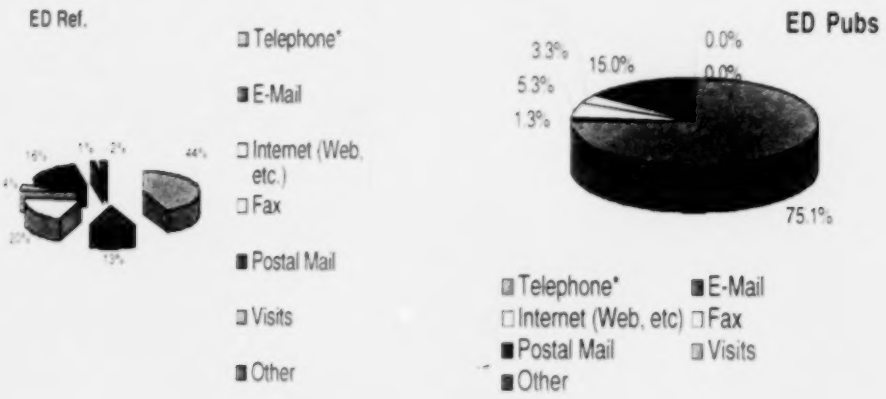
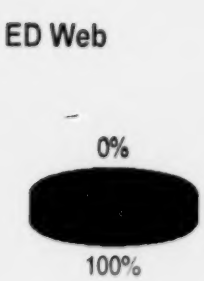
How Our Customers Reached Us

Perhaps the most important point revealed by these data, however, is that the overwhelming majority of customers come to NLE electronically or via our toll-free information services. They "visited" NLE from their homes, schools, or workplaces. Even most federal employees in the Washington area used NLE's services via telephone or e-mail. Our customers are no longer traditional library "patrons" who walk through the door of a reading room, and our programs reflect this shift.

Table 4.— How Our Customers Reached Us





Percentage is based upon 100% Internet data

No other information is available.

ED Pubs	
Telephone*	75.1%
E-Mail	1.3
Internet (Web, etc)	5.3
Fax	3.3
Postal Mail	15.0
Visits	0
Other	0

* Telephone contacts include toll-free numbers and direct dial

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Table 5.— Top 10 Customer Requests, FY 1998
(Online and Direct Requests)

1. Browsing the (online) collection and array of services.
2. Asking a reference question.
3. Ordering a publication or hard copy of a document in a database.
4. Requesting a database search.
5. Statistical assistance.
6. Information about a federal education program.
7. Information about an NLE program or service.
8. Borrowing an item in the library collection.
9. Referral to another information source.
10. Locating a person or office.

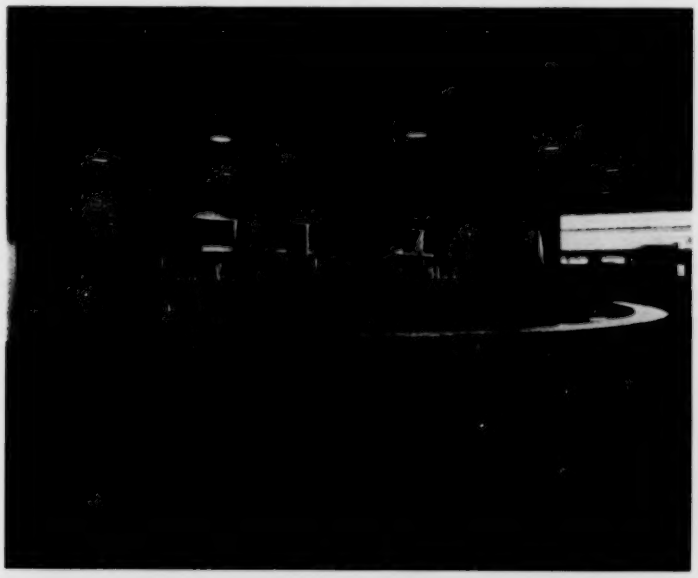
Our customers are also defined by their information needs. The people who contact NLE, and to whom we market our services, are interested in using our electronic resources to:

- obtain information products;
- information and statistics of national scope or significance;
- specific federal government information; and
- international information.

They want such things as:

- statistics that compare states or that compare the U.S. and the world;
- information about best practices from across the country on how to raise and educate children;
- information on what types of schooling work best in various circumstances;
- information on education history, policy, and law;
- technical information on subjects like educational assessments, finance, early preparation for college or work, and school construction;
- and help in locating difficult-to-find resources.

An Overall View of NLE Operations



From its inception, the NLE has strived to become a virtual library while maintaining traditional library activities such as acquisition.

Our new location offers additional networked databases and work station for our customers. All of our collections are on Open Stacks and we have merged our Legislative Reference Collection into the main Reference area of the Library.

NLE does not try to do everything or serve everybody. Its niche is the provision of information about education at the national, federal, and international levels. Specifically, this information includes resources of national importance or scope, resources by and about the federal government relating to education, and information concerning the activities of foreign national systems of education and international organizations engaged in educational activities.

Bearing this focus in mind, NLE is pleased to report the following results and accomplishments across its programs and activities for FY 1998.

Reference Center

The ED Reference Center served some 105,470 customers during FY 1998. This number represents a decline of 28 percent from FY 1997, which can largely be attributed to the switch of Department publications ordering to ED Pubs during the last FY quarter. Most of the ED Reference Center customers reached staff via the toll-free telephone number 1-800-424-1616 (49 percent) or via e-mail, directly or from the ED web site (38 percent). Just under 20 percent used mail delivery. The average daily customer volume was 406 persons.

Table 6.—ED Reference Center Collection

Items Added	
Books	5,003
Serials	10,814
Subscriptions	36
Documents*	56
Computer Files	129
Audiovisual Media	161
Microfiche	2,085
Maps/Charts	3
Other	3
TOTAL	*18,294*
Items Deleted	
All Deletions	5,900
Net Gain	12,394
Collection Total, Year-End	**718,600**
ERIC Program	
ERIC Database	
Documents Added	11,239
ERIC Products	
Major Publications	71
Topical Digests	174
Other Publications	245
Database Size, Year-End	**980,474**
ED Web Presence	
Internet Library	
Internet Library Files Added	396
Total Files Mounted, Year-End	**60,000**
TOTAL NLE RESOURCES	**1,759,074**

Customer Requests

Table 7.— ED Reference Center FY 1998 Customer Requests

Customer Pattern	
First-Time	74.3 %
Repeat	25.7
Reached ED Reference	
Directly	78.8 %
Routed/Referred	21.2
Services Requested*	
Research Assistance	32.1 %
Statistics Assistance	19.6
Database Search	9.7
Federal Program Information	12.0
NLE Information	5.6
Check Out Item	2.8
Interlibrary Loan	2.3
Referral to Other Source	1.2
Locate Person(s)	1.2
Order Publication**	51.9
Other	4.6

* Responses total more than 100 percent because customers could select more than one category. Many customers asked for more than one type of service during a single call or other contact.

** Publication distribution from the ED Reference Center ended during late FY 1998 when ED Pubs began operations.

SOURCE: Annual NLE/ED Reference Customer Survey. A sample of 2,300 was drawn from a population of 23,000 complete contact addresses stored in a database. There were 571 usable responses giving a rate of 24.8 percent.

"I am writing to thank you for the materials that you sent so quickly. I am very impressed at the service I received, and I will be sure to check your very helpful website frequently as I pursue my research. The material you sent will be central to several research projects."

Chicago, Customer

Customer Categories by Program

Fifty-eight percent of all ED Reference customers were education professionals and another 17 percent were from businesses or non-profit associations, while just under 11 percent were parents. Students and government officials represented smaller proportions, five percent and 7.5 percent respectively. These customer patterns reflect the function of the ED Reference Center as a specialized reference library concentrating on federal government information and statistics pertaining to education. Many of the corporate customers are repeat customers who depend upon the ED Reference Center for the latest federal data. Parents contact the Center to help them with issues such as relocating to other school districts, while teachers seek a wide variety of information to help with lesson preparation and professional development.

Table 8.—Ranking of Top FY 1998 Customer Categories by Program

ED Ref.	ERIC	ED Pubs	(NLE Avg.)
K-12 Educators	Bus./Non-Profits	Parents	(K-12 Educators)
Bus./Non-Profits	K-12 Educators	K-12 Educators	(Bus./Non-Profits)
PS Educators	Other Public	Bus./Non-Profits	(Parents)
Parents	Students	Other Public	(Other Public)
Students	PS Educators	Federal Govt.	(PS Educators)

About the NLE/ED Reference Customer Survey

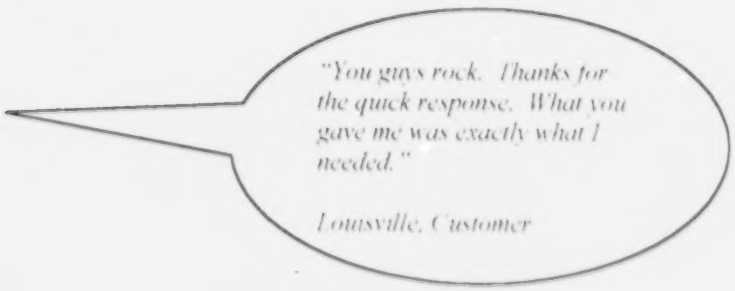
Each year NLE distributes an OMB-approved, voluntary customer survey to customers who have elected to provide contact information about themselves for this purpose. We protect our customers' privacy by asking them to participate before collecting contact data and by carefully securing the data for internal follow-up purposes only. Our program contractors, such as ERIC and ED Pubs, do the same.

ED Reference Center Performance

Table 9.—ED Reference Center FY 1998 Service Performance

Service Speed	
Very Prompt	81.3 %
Slight Delay	9.7
Long Delay	3.6
Failure, Gave Up	5.4
Service Behavior	
Served Immediately	86.5 %
Asked to Return Call Back	13.5%
Offered Assistance	96.7 %
Refused Service	3.3
Staff Impolite	6.2
Telephone Connection	
Toll-Free Ring Time	4.0 sec
Abandonment Rate	8.7 %
Right Referral	
Referred Elsewhere	14.5 %
Able to Reach Source	88.5 %
Source Helpful	87.5 %
Staff Polite	93.8 %

SOURCE: Annual NLE/ED Reference Customer Survey. A sample of 2,300 was drawn from a population of 23,000 complete contact addresses stored in a database. There were 571 usable responses giving a rate of 24.8 percent



Customer Satisfaction

Table 10.—ED Reference Center FY 1998 Customer Satisfaction

Quality of Service	
Good to Excellent	88.6 %
Mediocre to Poor	7.6
Not Responding	3.8
Usefulness of Service	
Helpful to Very Helpful	92.0 %
Marginal to Unhelpful	3.9
Not Responding	4.1
How Did ED Reference Help?*	
Work	63.3 %
Study Research	33.2
Personal Family Life	7.1
General Knowledge	7.0
Other	2.9
Would Customers Recommend ED Reference?	
Yes	94.0 %
No	6.0

* Responses exceed 100 percent because customers could select more than one category. For example, many teachers engaged in professional development studies checked both work and study.

SOURCE: Annual NLE/ED Reference Customer Survey. A sample of 2,300 was drawn from a population of 23,000 complete contact addresses stored in a database. There were 571 usable responses giving a rate of 24.8 percent.

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Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC continues to be the best-known "brand name" among all of NLE's programs and one of its most effective. The ERIC database, the world's largest English language database of education information, grew 3 percent in FY 1998 and stood at over 980,000 document files by year's end. In addition, the national network of ERIC Clearinghouses produced 71 major publications targeted for teachers, parents, and researchers; issued 174 brief digests on "hot" topics ranging from home schooling to getting on the Internet; and conducted 477 outreach and training sessions to introduce users to the ERIC system. In addition to the 2.2 million products distributed across America by the Clearinghouses, some 996,000 more were distributed by cooperating Regional Education Laboratories and other ERIC partners.

Table 11.—ERIC Program Performance, FY 1998: Productivity

Program Task	Number	Growth Over '97
ERIC Database		
New Search Terms Added	59	
Total Search Terms, End FY1998	10,624	5 %
Documents Added	11,239	
Journal Articles Added	17,465	
Database Size, End FY1998	980,474	3 %
ERIC Products		
New Major Publications	71	
New Topical Digest Reports	174	
New Other Publications	245	
Total New Publications, End FY1998	490	9 %
ERIC Services		
AskERIC Responses	43,340	33 %
Database Searches	27,150	
Conferences/Workshops	477	
Expert Presentations	231	
ERIC Marketing		
New Acquisition Arrangements*	84	
New Document Solicitations **	73,000	
New Standing Order Customers	12	

* The number of new acquisition arrangements established during the reporting period (includes Facility notification) Blanket release is not required

** The number of documents received during the reporting period to be reviewed for inclusion in the database udring the reporting period and identified as from a Clearinghouse acquisition arrangement or from written or verbal contact with an author, publisher, association, Central ERIC and the Facility

AskERIC, the ERIC online question-and-answer service, continued to grow by leaps and bounds and served 44,000 information customers in FY 1998. This represents a 33%

percent growth over FY 1997 despite the program being level-funded. Projections based on early FY 1999 figures are that this growth trend will continue at a similar pace. ERIC has also launched other information services in response to customer demand and national initiatives. These include the National Parent Information Network (NPIN); the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM), which serves practitioners with instructional resources; and the Virtual Reference Desk (VRD), which supports the education information pillar of the National Information Infrastructure (NII).

Table 12.—AskERIC FY 1998 Customer Base and Accessibility

Who Were the Customers?	
PreK-12 Educators	16.6 %
Postsecondary Educators	11.2
Students	34.6
Parents	8.8
Librarians	9.3
Government Employees	2.4
Other	17.1
Repeat User?	
Yes	50.8 %
No	49.2
How Was AskERIC Contacted?	
Direct E-Mail	69.4 %
Web Site	30.6
Was AskERIC Easy to Access?	
Yes	90.3 %
No	9.7
Could You Obtain Full Text of Cited Documents?	
Yes	60.6 %
No	39.4
If So, From What Source?	
Academic Library	63.1 %
Public Library	8.7
EDRS*	20.4
Journal Reprint Service	7.8

* EDRS stands for ERIC Document Reproduction Service, the contractor which processes full-text reprints of documents in the database for a fee.

SOURCE: AskERIC biennial marketing survey, 1999. A sample of 689 users returned 196 complete questionnaires, a response rate of 28.4 percent.

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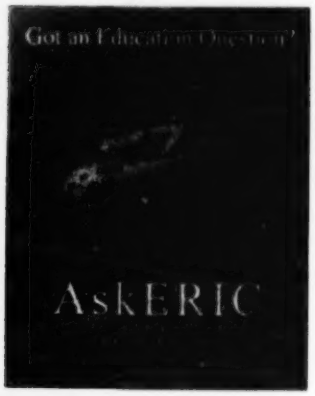

Table 13.—AskERIC FY 1998 Customer Satisfaction

Did AskERIC	(Yes Responses)
Provide Relevant Information	94.7%
Lead You to An Answer	84.9
Save You Time	92.3
Save You Money	51.4
Meet Expectations	41.8
Was AskERIC's Response	(Yes Responses)
Readable	97.8%
Detailed	93.1
Timely	94.6
How Information Was Used	
Research Work, Studies	41.7%
Classroom Teaching	26.4
Personal Enrichment	11.2
Career Preparation	12.7
Other	8.0
Would You Recommend AskERIC	
Yes	96.8%
No	3.2

SOURCE: AskERIC biennial marketing survey, 1999. A sample of 689 users returned 196 complete questionnaires, a response rate of 28.4 percent

Altogether, the ERIC Clearinghouses and support contractors reached 3.9 million customers directly in FY 1998 and several thousand more through the 660 ERIC partners (libraries, publishers, associations, Department of Education contractors and grantees, and schools). ERIC's customer audiences are students, both K-12 and postsecondary; the general public; and the professional community of education providers (associations, libraries, publishers, etc.) (see Table 2).

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INet: The Department's World Wide Web Presence

ED Web, the Department of Education's Internet presence, continued to grow in both service volume and quality during FY 1998. Customer activity on the main Department site, http://www.ed.gov/, experienced a growth of over 100 percent from FY 1997 (the fifth year in a row of over-100 percent annual increases), with over 12.5 million web site visits (by customers from individual computers) during FY 1998. There were at the same time over 53 million page views (uploads of individual web pages within the central Department web site) and nearly 252 million "hits" (contacts, intentional or accidental to the Department's site). By comparison, the number of gopher and FTP visits continued to decline, reflecting the steady migration of Americans to more sophisticated World Wide Web technology.

Table 14.—ED Web FY 1998 Performance (October-September)

www.ed.gov/	
Total Web Hits	251,823,657
Total Page Views	53,796,665
Total Site Visits	12,506,281
Average Views Per Day	147,388
Average Visits Per Day	34,264
Average Length of Visit	4 min., 48 sec.
Gopher.ed.gov/	
Total Gopher File Requests	789,267
ftp.ed.gov/	
Total FTP Files Accessed	14,231

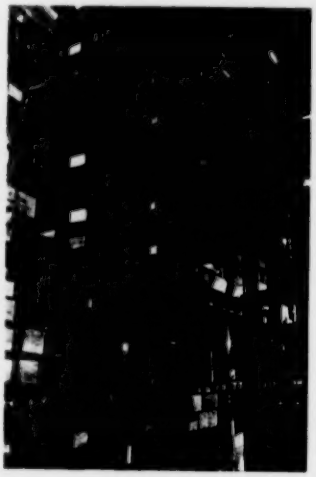
NOTE: The www.ed.gov averages are based on annualized totals.

During FY 1998 NLE and the Department's Office of the Chief Information Officer (ED/OCIO) worked out a mutually satisfactory arrangement for the joint management of the Department's Internet activity. NLE retained responsibility for content management of ED Web and administration of the web design and maintenance contracts, and the office of ED Webmaster resides within NLE. ED/OCIO took over responsibility for the technical management and maintenance of Internet systems and support, including the server equipment and security measures related to Internet accessibility. An Internet Working Group (IWG) was created, with members from OCIO, NLE, and other Department offices, to develop and oversee implementation of web policies.

Quality improvements continued to be made to ED Web on a daily basis by NLE staff and contractors. Department web sites, including the main site, were designed or redesigned during FY 1998 to keep up with new federal programs, services, and initiatives. The outstanding quality of this work was reflected in the fact that Department web sites received more than 20 awards from the private sector for quality, accessibility, and usefulness to the public and were mentioned or recommended an equal number of times in national publications.

EDPubs: Education Publication Center

EDPubs is a unique project because it is customer service oriented, performance based and involves several other government initiatives.



Orders are filled promptly by expert distribution center personnel.

NLE was tasked in FY 1997 to do what had never been done before: design and implement a comprehensive, user-friendly, and performance-based publication and product distribution system for the Department of Education. This contractor-run system would achieve bibliographic and inventory control over all Department products, consolidate warehouse operations, operate a customer-focused ordering center, and produce accurate guides and catalogs to federal education resources. NLE led a team of Department staff from the various offices that produce products for distribution. The job of designing ED Pubs was completed in FY 1998 and the initial contract was awarded in late May of that year. The warehouse is 95,000 square feet and can accommodate as many as 6,000 skids* of products.

ED Pubs proved its worth in only three months of operation. Not only did it relieve the ED Reference Center of the task of taking orders and distributing Departmental research and statistics publications; it also relieved other offices of similar burdens and realized a management cost savings. ED Pubs hit the ground running and was averaging over

*A skid is a palette, or flat support surface on which boxes of materials are stacked for storage. Skids measure 48" x 48" in size and boxes are vertically stacked to a height of 52" to 68" per skid.

10,000 customers served per month from the start. In response to customer interest, both* the ED Pubs toll-free order center and its print catalogs were configured to provide Spanish language service as well as English and to feature products in both languages. A web site linked to ED Web was also mounted to permit online customer service.

Our customers may call a toll-free number at the EDPubs Facility to order publications and materials.

Table 15.—ED Pubs FY 1998 Performance (June-September)

	Number	Percent
Warehousing		
Titles Received	524	
Fulfillment		
Customers Served	34,934	
Orders Processed	31,253	
Regular	*30,420*	*97.3 %*
Bulk	*315*	*1.0 %*
Expedited	*518*	*1.7 %*
Mass Mailings	216	
Customer Service		
Calls Processed	32,365	
Referred Elsewhere	1,777	5.5 %
Average Wait Time	9.6 sec.	
Abandonment Rate		3.3 %

Bringing ED Pubs into operation has required Department offices to revamp their internal distribution operations, terminate existing contracts, and reassign personnel. This has inevitably been a gradual process, but it is proceeding with Department encouragement and the increasingly positive reputation of ED Pubs among customers and agency stakeholders.

National Clearinghouse for Education Facilities (NCEF)

The National Center for Educational Facilities (NCEF) was created to provide information support to the national initiative to remodel existing K-12 school buildings and construct new facilities. NCEF is affiliated with the ERIC system but also provides legal, financial, and engineering information on building planning, design, construction, and maintenance that lies outside the scope of education per se. In addition to a technical information database, mailing list, and publications, an online "AskNCEF" service similar to Ask ERIC permits professionals and others to make inquiries and received specialized answers within one week.

In FY 1998 the NCEF contract was awarded, and work had just begun when the fiscal year ended.

National Education Network (NEN)

The National Education Network (NEN) grew out of NLE's statutory mandate to create a nationwide network of major education information providers which would develop collaborative resource sharing projects. Toward this end, NLE convened a conference of some 90 representatives of education libraries, archives, education institutions, associations, education publishers, media outlets, and foundations to plan the network. This first meeting was held in November, 1997 at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. A set of broad mission goals was developed and it was agreed to set up a small planning group to draft a mission and operating principles. An Executive Committee was named as at the end of FY 1998.

NEN is a non-governmental organization which includes NLE as a member and for which NLE provides support, including staff and funding for special projects.

NEN is a collaborative partnership of entities who have as part of their mission the collection, production, and/or dissemination of education information. NEN is committed to preserving the educational past, connecting the education present, and shaping the education future.

U.S. Network for Education Information (USNEI)

As part of its authorized cooperation with other federal agencies that provide education information, NLE, on behalf of the Department of Education, undertook to establish an official national education information center to fulfill U.S. international obligations at the request of the Department of State and U.S. Information Agency plus several private sector education associations. USNEI was created as an interagency and public/private partnership managed by NLE on behalf of the U.S. education community to provide information on U.S. education and education overseas to Americans and others. Operating as a distributed network, USNEI's partners provide information and referral services so that customers can efficiently reach appropriate authorities and U.S. education is presented to Americans and the world as a coherent system. The distributed character of USNEI permits it to also reflect the decentralized character of U.S. education.

Marketing Research and Outreach

As a relatively new service organization, NLE considers a marketing and outreach function to be critical to its success. Marketing and outreach not only provide visibility and publicity, but also enable NLE to obtain and use customer feedback to improve its operations. NLE's marketing plan focuses on getting the products and services to our customers through extensive analysis in the target markets, reaching the target market through careful distribution and promotion, and retaining our customers through excellent product design, service, and prudent cost. Customer service data are:

- employed in NLE's planning and budgeting activities;
- to track NLE's contribution to the Department's annual performance indicators; and
- to assist NLE managers and staff in maintaining and improving service quality as well as making operational decisions. (Refer to the section titled "Our Customers," beginning on page xx.)

During FY 1998, marketing and outreach activities included:

- Instituted the first annual customer satisfaction survey for the ED Reference Center;
- Established customer feedback data as a requirement in the new contracts for the ERIC, ED Pubs, and NCEF programs;
- Conducted training sessions on Internet-based instruction designed especially for K-12 teachers and school media specialists. activities included:

- Exhibited and presented at the annual meetings of the American Library Association, Special Libraries Association, and the Association of College and Research Libraries.

- Created an Informational Packet for marketing purposes containing posters and exhibit products, brochures, and formal announcements highlighting the move to Department headquarters, and a Library User Guide containing policies and procedures for on-site users of the reference collection. A regular newsletter, *The Column*, was begun to inform friends and customers about NLE news and developments.

NLE's outreach efforts did not neglect our internal agency customers. In preparation for the move of the ED Reference Center and NLE administration to 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, NLE began a series of internal customer focus groups with the leadership of key Department offices. These focus groups seek to learn what each program office seeks in the way of information needs and establishes ongoing contacts. NLE also continued the highly successful Quarterly Lecture Series, which brings information dissemination leaders from across America to Washington to provide ED and other federal agencies with their expertise and examples of best practices. In addition, NLE has furthered its high-tech information orientation by joining CENDI, an interagency consortium comprising the Departments of Commerce, Energy, Defense, Interior, and NASA (plus OMB and Agriculture) that is dedicated to sharing electronic information resource management ideas and solutions. NLE has hosted CENDI members and has made presentations and established partnerships with other federal libraries and information centers via FLICC, the Federal Library and Information Center Committee.

Research Projects

The National Library of Education continues its role as the nation's creator and collector of education research information with two important and ongoing research tracts: digital research projects and research publication series. The two most well known digital research projects are the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM) and the Virtual Reference Desk (VRD).

Digital Research Projects:

- *Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM)*

The NLE is spearheading a consortium effort called the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM), http://www.thegateway.org. This special project of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology, located at Syracuse University, provides educators with quick and easy access to the substantial, but uncataloged, collections of educational materials found on various federal, state,

university, non-profit, and commercial Internet sites. The Gateway is easy to use. Teachers can search or browse GEM and find high quality educational materials from GEM Consortium member sites. Eighteen kinds of resources, including lesson plans, activities and projects can be found in the Gateway to Educational Materials project. When educators connect to GEM, they are able to: browse through lists organized by subject, keyword, or grade/education level; search by subject, keyword, title or the full-text of the resource's catalog record; go directly to the resource from GEM.

Organizations with Internet-based collections of educational resources that are interested in joining the GEM Project should send an e-mail message to http://www.geminfo@geminfo.org.

- *Virtual Reference Desk (VRD)*

The Virtual Reference Desk (VRD) http://www.vrd.org is a new project creating the foundations for a national cooperative digital reference service. The project is sponsored by the NLE and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology, with support from the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The VRD seeks to identify and provide the resources necessary to connect users with individuals who possess specialized subject or skill expertise. Unlike static Web pages, digital reference services allow Internet users to contact people who can answer specific questions and provide instructions on developing certain skills. The goals of the project include research into current ways in which K-12 community members receive answers to questions on the Internet and development of a national collaborative network of Internet-based question-answering services.

The VRD project has developed a searchable database of Internet-based question-answering and referral services. The database, named the AskA+ Locator, is designed to link students, parents, and educators with experts in a variety of fields via the Internet. The AskA+ Locator contains detailed profiles of each service, including a brief description, intended audience and grade level, and subjects addressed. The AskA+ Locators is located at http://www.vrd.org/locator/index.html. Products include recommendations from model digital reference services and training/preparation materials and services for new digital reference administrators and staff.

- *Digitized Research Literature Project*

The NLE offers an impressive collection of federally sponsored research literature on a set CD-ROMs. The set of 32 disks contains approximately 8,300 ERIC resumes of Research and Development Centers and over 5,000 full-text documents found in the ERIC database of all National Educational Research and Development Centers from

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1966 to 1997. These materials, previously available only in microfiche or paper copies, give educators and researchers access to the latest education information. A search engine provides quick access to digital images of curriculum and instructional materials.

The Focus Search Scope offers users a variety of search features. A user may search choosing either one or all of the following: the document number, clearinghouse number, title of publication, publication type, author, descriptors, identifiers, issue, abstract, and institution. Users have an option of either a 16 bit or 32 bit platform. Disk one is used to reflect future additional information. For convenience, the user can minimize the screen, backtrack, and view another disk.

NLE Research Publication Project

The NLE research publication project, based upon research synthesis on critical issues in American education, is designed to address the lack of balanced and objective information needed to guide the actions and decisions of researchers, policymakers, teachers, administrators, students, and parents. The Research Publication Project addresses this need by collecting the empirical literature on critical issues in education, perusing research methods and results, and producing studies that are comprehensive and unbiased.

- *Advances in Education Research*

Publications such as *Advances in Education Research* promote recent research findings and disseminate the latest education information. During 1998, NLE, directed attention to research on the subject of community service learning. Community service learning has been the subject of extensive publications in the last 5 years, however, it has not been the subject of much research. The majority of the community service learning literature is best practice ideas, highlighting model programs nationally. This issue of *Advances in Education Research, Volume 3, Fall 1998*, in partnership with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, identifies the best research on community service learning within the higher education context.

Although definitions of community service learning vary widely, this collection of research focuses on a specific type of experience that involves working with the community and focusing on citizenship, service, and education in order to ground the learning process. The focus of the literature contained in this publication is empirical research or meta-analyses that capture the knowledge base to date on service learning. It is organized around six themes: philosophy and history of service learning; national and state trends; institutional trends and issues; outcomes assessment; program design; and evaluation and research issues.

- *Research Syntheses*

Often it is hard to tell what conclusions can be drawn from education research studies, because the studies on a given subject have not been examined systematically as a body of research. Analyses conducted at different times with different populations and different research methods often yield apparently inconsistent conclusions about the same subject. Given ambiguous research findings, advocates of one position or another may promote those that support their views, while ignoring or minimizing contrary findings. In such circumstances, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners, such as teachers and administrators, may lack the comprehensive balanced, objective information they need. While many good syntheses of education research have been produced over the years, many topics have not yet been covered. In response to this need, the NLE has undertaken a series of research syntheses on issues of public concern in education. The synthesis are designed to be empirical, even-handed, and as comprehensive as possible.

The first synthesis entitled *Educational and Labor Market Performance of GED Recipients* examined research on the outcomes of the General Educational Development (GED) credential. Among other things, it found that while GED recipients have about the same literacy skills as high school graduates, they are unlike high school graduates in other important respects. For example, there are marked differences between the two groups in persistence. For GED holders, the persistence problems that initially led to dropping out of high school tended to recur in other contexts, such as postsecondary education, the labor market, and the military. The study recommends more rigorous educational programs for high school dropouts and more attention to addressing problems related to persistence.

The second study, *College for All? Is There Too Much Emphasis on Getting a 4-year College Degree?* examined the research on the economic outcomes of a college education. It found that while college continues to be a good investment for those who graduate, 4-year college dropouts earn no more than community college attendees with the same amount of education. In addition, their cognitive skill gains are no greater than those of their community-college counterparts, and they are more likely to leave school with debts from student loans. The study recommends that counselors advise high school graduates whose academic skills or commitment to college are marginal to consider enrolling in a community college or postsecondary vocational program.

Potential topics for the third synthesis are currently being reviewed.

Conclusion

Since 1994, the National Library of Education has been on an ambitious expansion of its programs and services. New constituencies, new developments in technology, and new projects have arrived in the Library almost daily and, for each challenge, the Library staff has risen to the challenge. Not only has the Library been successful in its work, but it has also earned the reputation as an organization that values and excels at creativity, scholarship and service.

The first four years have been productive ones; future years promise to be filled with even greater advances in services and innovations. If a library is the true heart of a university, then the National Library of Education may be said to be the heart of the Department of Education—a place where the past, present, and future converge to further American Education.

The Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, is to be thanked for their support and commitment to the National Library of Education. Without their assistance, the Library would not be the vibrant place that it is. The Library's clients also make the Library lively and interesting and they are to be thanked for their contribution as well.

Learn about the past, discover the present, and create the future at the National Library of Education.

NLE Contacts

Web Sites

U.S. Department of Education: http://www.ed.gov
National Library of Education: http://www.ed.gov/NLE
ACCESS ERIC: http://www.aspensys.com/eric
National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: http://www.edfacilities.org
ED Pubs: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html
National Education Network:
U.S. Network for Education Information: http://www.ed.gov/usnei

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Washington, DC 20202-5523

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TTY:	202-205-7561
Reference Desk numbers:	202-205-5015 and 202-205-5019
Circulation Desk number:	202-205-4945
Fax:	202-401-0547

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